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exquisite that it is difficult otherwise to get close enough to appreciate fully its beauty. From a bracelet of rather heavy double links is suspended a pendant in the form of a Pan playing the syrinx. He is half crouching, half sitting, with the hoof of one leg tucked under the knee of the other in a charmingly lifelike attitude; and though only a little over one inch in height, is modeled with all the care and finish one might bestow on an important statue. The bent little body, the shaggy hair on the goat's legs, every feature of the face, are all beautifully rendered; even such a detail as the bent fingers as they press on the pipes of the syrinx is carefully indicated—though it can hardly be seen with the naked eye. But most remarkable of all is the expression of the face. Pan is evidently completely absorbed in the music he is making, rather that of an animal giving itself up to a pleasurable sensation. And yet there is also a note of pathos



FIG. 3. PENDANT OF A
BRACELET
IV-III CENTURY B. C.

such as we sometimes find in Greek representations of clowns. This mingling of the animal and the human in the expression of a deeply felt emotion is a feat such as we rarely encounter in impersonal Greek art. It shows us what the Greek artist could do when he attempted subtle analysis. The piece is obviously intended to be seen from all sides and is composed so that it can be enjoyed from every angle as a "thing of beauty."

Again, it is difficult to connect this piece with other representations, for there are hardly any parallels. The naturalistic conception places it in the Hellenistic period. Perhaps closest to it in spirit is a gold collar, also from a tomb in South Russia, with representations of goats and sheep in remarkably lifelike attitudes.⁴ These show the same power of intimate observation and artistic interpretation which the artist of our Pan had to such a remarkable degree. Since this collar was found with objects

⁴Cf. *Compte-rendu* 1869, I, 13, and Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, p. 429.

assignable to the late fourth and third centuries B. C., we have here a clue for the dating of our bracelet. Fortunately the condition of the bracelet is excellent, the only serious blemish being some black stains caused by the oxidization of the silver.⁵
G. M. A. R.

SASSANIAN POTTERY

"FOR four centuries Sassanian civilization dominated the world; this affirmation, at first glance so audacious, will be strengthened more and more by future discoveries and research." With this challenging statement Maurice Pezard begins his book on *La Ceramique de l'Islam et ses Origines* (published 1920), a volume which is of peculiar interest to students of the Museum collections since it illustrates and describes a rare group of Sassanian red earthenware with scenes in relief, of which G. J. Demotte has recently given us ten exam-

ples found in the vicinity of Teheran.¹

Archaeologists and historians long held the theory that all later art sprang from Greco-Roman civilization and that Sassanian art in particular was but an Oriental successor of the Greek and hence of slight interest. This theory was based upon the false supposition that when in the fourth century B. C. Alexander of Macedon conquered the Persian Empire its ancient traditions were lost; that Greek and, later, Roman ideas shaped the Oriental civilization of the next five and a half centuries; and when in the third century A. D. a native dynasty again incorporated all the lesser kingdoms in one great Persian empire, that of the Sassanids, it was scarcely more than the daughter of Byzantium and Rome, showing perhaps some traces of its

⁵A fuller publication of these important pieces will shortly appear in the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

¹Of the ten, six are described and illustrated in Pezard's book, pls. VI and CL, fig. 1.

Oriental forebears. Had this been the case, the Sassanids could hardly have given to the world any unique contributions in art or culture; their art would have been but a Persian interpretation of Greek and Roman ideas.

In striking contrast to this point of view is that taken by modern Oriental scholars who assert that the splendor of the Sassanian civilization was based upon a continuous Oriental tradition.² The first great Persian or Iranian empire (VI-IV century

the fourth century B. C. Alexander of Macedon conquered this Iranian empire and Greek ideas were freely introduced. There is strong evidence to prove, however, that Greek influence was never more than superficial; that underneath the Hellenic veneer the people remained Persian in spirit and culture; and that the old Iranian traditions were preserved from Achaemenian times until they blossomed forth in full splendor under the Sassanids.

During the interval of 547 years between the fall of the Achaemenids and the rise of the Sassanids, these traditions and the Zoroastrian religion were continued with peculiar vigor and purity in the southwestern portion of Iran, in the district known in antiquity as Persis and in modern times as Fars, which was remote and untouched by foreign influences and where the simple, hardy folk preserved their inheritance as a sacred duty. It was from this district that the early Achaemenian kings had sprung, and here a succession of native princes continued to rule despite the downfall of other Asiatic kingdoms, until in the third century A. D. one of these Persian princes arose, extended his conquests until he was king of all Iran, and became the first of the Sassanian line, Ardashir I.

With this link supplied, the chain connecting the ancient Orient and Sassanian civilization appears complete and unbroken, and the truly Oriental heritage of the latter is proved. Having established these facts, one can appreciate the artistic achievements of the Sassanids from the third to the seventh century. Following the traditions of their ancestors, they produced superb and highly decorative sculptures, some adequate conception of which can now be gained from the illuminating volume by Sarre and Herzfeld, *Iranische Felsreliefs, Aufnahmen und Untersuchungen von Denkmälern aus Alt- und Mittelpersischer Zeit*. The Persians of this period were likewise master-builders, working with brick and following the vault and cupola construction common among the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Achaemenids.

While the Sassanids were great architects and sculptors, it is in the so-called minor arts that their influence was most direct and



FIG. 1. SASSANIAN VASE SHOWING CHINESE INFLUENCE IN SHAPE

B. C.), established by the Achaemenian kings after the downfall of the Semitic empires of antiquity, the Assyrian and Babylonian, was strongly national in character and was further unified by the wide diffusion of the state religion, Zoroastrianism, the cult of Ahura-mazda. The art of the Achaemenians, closely related to that of their predecessors, the Babylonians, has been perpetuated by splendid memorials at Susa, Pasargadae, and Persepolis so that its characteristic features are well known. In

²In *La Ceramique de l'Islam et ses Origines* Pezard gives an admirable summary; upon his resumé the present account is largely based.

far-reaching. They excelled in the making of textiles, metalwork, glass, enamels, and in the painting of miniatures. There may be seen in museums and private collections today many examples of the gold, silver, and copper vessels of this period, enriched with distinctly Oriental decorative motives and figures.

From the Chinese, with whom they had for centuries carried on trade, the Persians learned the secret of silk culture and such proficient weavers did they become that in the Sassanian period they were the recognized rivals of the Chinese. Byzantium did not discover the secret of sericulture until the sixth century. At this time the Persian art was in its glory and many of the Sassanian fabrics were imported into Byzantium where they were richly prized and where they stimulated local weavers. While most of the Sassanian tissues have been lost, their distinctly Iranian designs have been preserved in Byzantine fabrics of which they were the inspiration. Sassanian influence upon Greco-Roman design in general was apparent in the tendency toward conventionalization instead of the naturalism of classic art.

Through various channels these Iranian influences were spread far and wide. From Byzantium they were carried throughout the Mediterranean world. In the arts of Egypt and India they may also be distinctly traced. When in the seventh century the Arabs overthrew the Sassanian Empire, the conquest was primarily of a political character. The Arabs themselves were not distinguished for creative genius, but they readily assimilated the Iranian culture of the subject Persians and disseminated it throughout Europe through their conquests and through their contact with the Crusaders.

In Pezard's comprehensive study of Islamic pottery and its origins we can trace the development of one Sassanian art from its beginnings in ancient Persia to its flowering in the days of Moslem rule. After a brief review of proto-Sassanian wares, the author describes that class of Sassanian pottery of immediate interest to us, the group of red earthenware objects with decoration in relief. The examples thus far

discovered are very few. Mr. Demotte knows of but seventeen, and of this number the Museum through his generosity now possesses ten. The pieces appear to have been made in molds in which the scenes had previously been modeled intaglio. Upon removal from the mold, the details were



FIG. 2. SASSANIAN VASE SHOWING COSTUME WITH TIARA

probably given a sharper definition with a tool. Certain ornaments, such as the serpents modeled on the shoulder of the Museum vase (fig. 2), may have been molded separately and then applied to the piece. The technique and the general scheme of decoration remind us of the red pottery bowls decorated with formal patterns in relief, so extensively made in Arretium (the modern Arezzo) in Italy. The Sassanian ware is sometimes almost as soft as plaster and comparatively light in color as though

it may have been fired at a low temperature. The majority of the Museum examples, however, seem to have received a somewhat hotter fire which has made the clay denser, harder, and darker in tone. Pezard describes them as having, in most instances, a brownish red glaze or varnish, but this seems open to question. Where the pieces have been broken or chipped, the interior of the ware shows the same color and much the same texture as the exterior. When glaze was used it must have formed a very thin coating which did not alter the color of the ware and which has now been largely destroyed by burial in the earth. The most common and probably the most typically Persian shape is an ovoid vase with short neck, of which the Demotte gift includes several examples (fig. 3). Sometimes, however, the forms suggest foreign types: figures 1 and 2, for example, are almost certainly derived from Chinese models, while others are related to Greek and Roman shapes.

The decoration is quite schematic: stiff little figures follow each other in continuous procession around these vases, or compose themselves into formal groups. Occasionally, as in one Museum vase with handles, single figures are set off in compartments. The scenes are represented on a small scale and the details are therefore difficult at times to identify, especially as they are often further obscured by a limy incrustation. However, these miniature bas-reliefs are of such a varied and ambitious character and are so directly related not only to the great sculptures of the Sassanian period but also to those of the ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, and Achaemenids that they present unique interest. It is most unusual to find in common pottery of this period such scenes as

are represented on these Sassanian vases, their subjects drawn from the annals of the kings or from religious rites. In one of the Museum vases, for example, the king is represented seated upon a high-backed throne, receiving the homage of his vassals (fig. 1), while farther on is shown a sacrificial procession. On another vase the king is depicted raising a mace to strike a conquered prince who prostrates himself, supplicating his captor for mercy. Back of the king a royal attendant wafts a fan. Two

other vases are especially reminiscent of the grand bas-reliefs, for here is suggested the splendor of the royal cortège, with the king mounted on horseback and attended by a servitor with a fan.

In most instances the king's apparel consists of a robe falling almost to the feet and a tiara which recalls those worn by the Achaemenian rulers. The long floating ribbons of the



FIG. 3. SASSANIAN JAR WITH
A CARAVAN SCENE

former, however, are characteristic of the Sassanian period. In one vase (fig. 2) each side presents the king in true Sassanian costume with closely pleated tunic, a short mantle resembling a collar, the flowing ribbons, and two types of tiara. The other personages depicted on this pottery are shown either bareheaded or with the conical bonnet of the Persians, they wear long robes or short tunics, and have pointed beards and thick masses of hair falling to the neck. These various features are of great assistance in dating the pottery.

Since Zoroastrianism was the state religion, scenes depicting its various rites are frequently found on these vases. Fire worship had been part of the ancient Iranian religion and was adopted as an essential feature of the cult of Ahura-mazda. Fire altars with attendant priests and scenes of libation and sacrifice are sometimes portrayed on this pottery. The serpent of

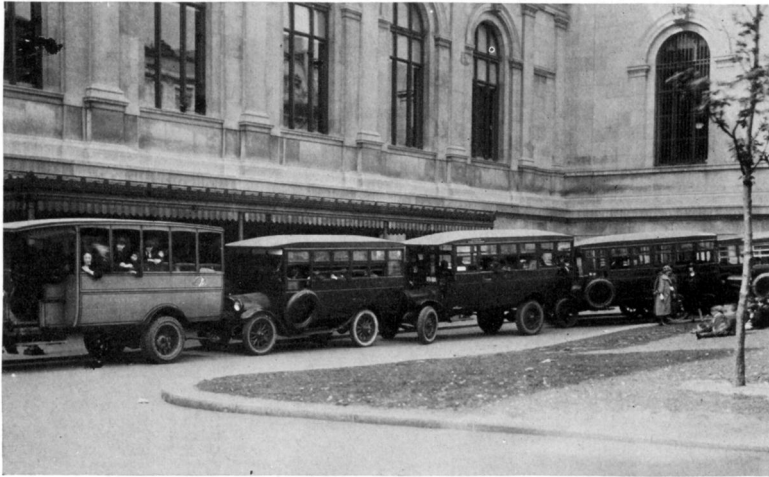
BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Zoroastrianism is represented entwined about the neck of a water jug, or modeled in relief upon the shoulder of a vase (fig. 2). Occasionally the winged figure of Ahura-mazda, symbol of all goodness, is seen hovering above the king (figs. 1-2) or his warriors. That daily life was sometimes featured is proved by the very realistic caravan scene on one of the Museum jars (fig. 3).

In conclusion, Pezard assigns the group

friends a few of the pleasant letters recently received by the officers and officials of the Museum, we print the following extracts:

"Now that the Museum lecture courses are drawing to a close, I am going to add, if you will let me, a word to statistics which show for themselves how well the Museum lectures are attended. For sometimes when such good effort is made to give much to the public, perhaps you do not



CHILDREN WHO CANNOT WALK COMING TO
THE MUSEUM FOR A STORY-HOUR

to the third to fourth century, stating that, in his opinion, "this curious type of pottery originated in Persis; in it there is much that is strongly reminiscent of a glorious past, as certain themes and the spirit of many of the scenes recall so vividly Achaemenian times; as, on the other hand, the group presents features obviously Sassanian, we think that it continues the traditions of the preceding school and belongs consequently to the early portion of the new Persian dynasty." C. L. A.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT THE MUSEUM

SPONTANEOUS appreciation and friendly criticism are alike evidences of interest. In no spirit of vainglory but rather in a desire to share with our members and

realize how much it has meant to an individual.

"And so Sunday becomes a wonderful day of treat for me. I am able then to get three good lectures there, yet still regretting that living outside the city I have been unable this year to be present for the week-day courses of Miss Abbot. I have been fortunate in having missed but few of Mrs. Carey's splendid Gallery Talks and have had the same advantage for the other Sunday lectures, including those for children.

"It is for these especially that I would like to express my appreciation, for they are unique, and not so well known of course to adults. Any teacher would marvel at that large audience (two audiences sometimes as I recollect) of Tom, Dick, Harry, and those of other names and many ages and